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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. IV, sect. D), A/46/38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491 and 501)

1. Mrs. Sabria BOUKADOUM (Algeria) said that the elimination of discrimination against women and the establishment of a just society based on equality for all without distinction of any kind was one of the main factors that would determine the future of society. It would be impossible to attain the better world to which all aspired if women continued to be prevented from participating in the development process and were denied their legitimate rights. As matters stood, there was nothing to indicate that the legal and social status of women was about to improve, and it had become clear that, without real determination and a firm commitment on the part of the international community, millions of women would continue to live in virtual servitude.
2. In order to halt the trend towards the marginalization of most women in the new world that was being created, four elements must come into play: the question of women must be given priority, it must be integrated into world strategies, there must be more action, and funds must be made available.
3. After describing those four elements in detail, she urged that the planned interregional consultation on women in public life, which had not taken place due to lack of funds and facilities, should be held. Consideration should be given as soon as possible to the possibility of raising the funds necessary for that meeting and for the World Conference on Women.
4. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had offered practical and effective guidelines for long-term world action and provided an appropriate framework for promoting the advancement of women and ensuring their full integration into development efforts.
5. In that connection, the Commission on the Status of Women was acting as a catalyst in the implementation of those Strategies.
6. In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women contained a set of principles to safeguard the rights of women and offered a programme of action whereby Member States could see to it that those rights were exercised.
7. In the current critical times, the international community should centre its efforts on the adoption of more energetic measures and on achieving the priority objectives rather than on establishing new legal standards which, though necessary, did not always guarantee tangible progress. In that connection, attention should be drawn to the proposal to draft an international instrument on violence against women; an effective and speedy

(Mrs. Sabria Boukadoum, Algeria)

response was needed to that serious problem which threatened the physical integrity and the dignity of the human person.

8. Other forms of suffering to which the great majority of women were exposed, especially in the developing countries, should not be overlooked; women confronted violence daily in an unequal battle against hunger, disease and ignorance. Special, and even priority, attention should be paid to the situation of the vast majority of women whose sole aspiration to equality was simply to survive.

9. Algeria, as a developing country, felt compelled to stress the duty of the international community, and the wealthy countries in particular, to show solidarity with the women of the most disadvantaged regions.

10. The deepening economic crisis posed a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of women and it was clear that, unless the world confronted poverty and its attendant diseases and social disasters with determination, courage and solidarity, the status of women would not change. Every effort must be made to achieve equitable economic development; once that was done, new opportunities would open for the women of the developing countries.

11. Although the struggle of women to advance their rights meant a struggle for better social and economic conditions, in some parts of the world it took the form of a political struggle for recognition of their legitimate rights to peace and security for themselves and for their peoples. Palestinian women were subjected to discrimination on two fronts, as women and as Palestinians living under the yoke of occupation. The international community was duty-bound to show constant and unswerving solidarity with the women of Palestine, as with all women living in situations of conflict.

12. The 1995 World Conference on Women represented not only a challenge in defining the modalities for initiating effective and energetic action to make it possible to implement the strategies for advancement sought by women, but it also provided an opportunity to build the world to which all aspired, in which men and women would enjoy the same rights.

13. Ms. AL-I'AMAMI (Yemen) said that, in both the national and international context, Yemen gave women the means they needed to take their place in society on an equal footing with men, in keeping with the current interest in women's questions at the world level. In the last 10 years, the participation of women in the development of society had advanced still further in Yemen and positive changes had been made consistent with Islam, with the goals and values of society and with development needs.

14. The Constitution and many Yemeni laws gave the women of Yemen the same rights as men. Women performed many functions in public life and had the right to vote and to be elected. The Union of Yemeni Women examined women's problems and made recommendations to the competent authorities. Women could

(Ms. Al-Hamami, Yemen)

occupy posts befitting to them and perform duties in the House of Representatives together with men; they could also engage in various political activities in keeping with the country's democratic climate and the tolerant religion of Islam.

15. The access enjoyed by Yemeni women to education and employment had enabled them to distinguish themselves in several fields. Their outstanding role in economic and social development was also recognized. Women's questions were not dealt with separately because economic and social underdevelopment affected everyone alike.

16. In view of the positive changes that had taken place in the world Yemen felt optimistic about holding the World Conference on Women in 1995. It hoped that, by then, the women of Palestine and other oppressed women would enjoy all their rights.

17. Yemen urged the international community to continue its fight to eliminate poverty, illiteracy and disease, which were the main factors affecting women in the developing countries.

18. Mrs. KABA-CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that there were a whole series of social, economic and legal indicators for measuring the advancement of women, designed to enable women to enjoy the same rights and benefits as men.

19. Aware of the injustices suffered by women throughout the world, the United Nations had established, as far back as 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had been adopted after years of hard work. It could legitimately be asked whether those efforts had borne fruit and whether women really were better off in 1991.

20. According to the 1991 World Economic Survey poverty among women and children continued to be the principal obstacle to development. In sub-Saharan Africa, the illiteracy rate for women was over 65 per cent, while the rate for men was 41 per cent; the Survey predicted that by the year 2000 one out of every two adult women would still be illiterate. The school enrolment rate among girls was 48 per cent at the primary level, 38 per cent at the secondary level and 18 per cent at the advanced level. Those figures reflected the fact that poor families preferred to invest in their sons rather than in their daughters.

21. With respect to health matters, the World Health Organization reported that the mortality rate for adolescent girls was higher than that for adolescent boys since girls suffered not only from malnutrition, lack of medical care and long work days but also from illnesses related to pregnancy, early and repeated pregnancies, clandestine abortions and difficult deliveries.

(Mrs. Kaba-Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

22. In the African countries, which had a predominantly agricultural economy, women produced three quarters of the food; yet, under national legislation they were denied the right to own land, and agricultural labour was considered an extension of domestic work. The African woman, illiterate and without technical support or access to credit, lived in increasing poverty. It was time to act and to focus the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations on improving the living conditions of those vulnerable groups.

23. Among women living in particularly difficult circumstances, particular attention should be paid to elderly women, disabled women and, above all, refugee women and children, who made up 80 per cent of the 15 million refugees world-wide. It was a sad fact that the bulk of refugee assistance went to men.

24. The Third Committee should study domestic laws, since some legislation contained unjust provisions which should be repealed. For example, incredible though it seemed, there were laws which punished women who had been victims of rape. At its twenty-fourth Convention, the International Federation of Women Lawyers had urged all members to pressure their Governments to abolish aberrant practices and legislation.

25. After restructuring its administration her country had embarked on the process of ratifying all the international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the guiding principles of the Convention were, however, already incorporated in its national legislation and the Forward-looking Strategies were part of the Government's policy for the advancement of women. Nevertheless, like all African women, Ivorian women were the first to suffer from any sharp drop in the standard of living and were affected most severely by measures to reduce public spending on education, health and social services. In fact, the development policies carried out in Africa during the current decade had yielded only mediocre results; women must participate at all levels, and policies must be designed to offer both men and women equal opportunities and an equal share in the economic and social development of the continent.

26. It was necessary to have statistical data in order to be able to assess the situation of women, to evaluate the progress achieved and to identify those sectors in which improvement was needed. It was clear that education was the key to the advancement of women and to their participation in public life.

27. Large numbers of women and women's organizations should participate in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, since women played a major role in any environmental preservation policy and constituted the group most affected by environmental degradation. The Conference should adopt measures to raise public awareness about the problems of deforestation, pollution and conservation of natural resources.

(Mrs. Kaba-Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

28. In awarding the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize to a woman, the Committee had paid tribute to women all over the world who were struggling and working for democracy and human rights. It was important to study more closely the role of women in political life and to seek ways in which women could participate in decision-making. The United Nations should set the example by hiring qualified women to fill senior positions, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Underrepresentation of African women in international organizations was, in fact, a serious problem and the services of African experts should be used in order to get a better understanding of the situation of African women and to respond to their needs.

29. She urged countries to make careful preparations for the 1995 World Conference on Women, so that it should serve not as a forum for the airing of complaints and regrets but as a forum where women and men who were determined to tackle the major challenges of the contemporary world could put forward concrete proposals for removing the obstacles that stood in the way of a new, fairer and more equal world.

30. Ms. FRITSCHÉ (Liechtenstein) said that democracy was advancing in almost all parts of the world. But, democracy did not lead to the advancement of women; moreover, without the advancement of women, there could be no real democracy.

31. According to the latest data, a woman doing the same work as a man was paid only 60 to 70 per cent of what a man was paid world-wide. Governments did not consider women's work economically productive; if women's housework were included in the calculation, the gross domestic product of many countries would increase by 25 to 30 per cent. Women accounted for 50 per cent of the world's population; yet they received only 10 per cent of all revenues and owned only 1 per cent of all property. That was primarily due to existing legislation, which did not recognize a woman's right to own or to inherit property.

32. People had to be aware of their rights in order to enjoy them. Although levels of education for women had been rising in recent years, women's literacy rates still lagged behind those of men in many countries.

33. Environmental damage and destruction had reached the point where concerted global action was required. While those problems affected all countries, women in developing countries suffered the most: it was women who performed the bulk of the agricultural work, who were most affected by diseases caused by contaminated water and who were most exploited.

34. According to a recent WHO report on AIDS, HIV-infected persons included an increasing number of women and children. That was another field of discrimination: women in certain regions, for religious, social or cultural reasons, could not protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases. Immediate protective measures, involving information and counselling, must be taken.

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(Ms. Fritsche, Liechtenstein)

35. Improvements in the status of women were more visible in industrialized countries, where female participation had begun to increase. However, such women were regarded as pioneers; the levers of power remained in the hands of men. Progress had also been made in eradicating legal discrimination against women, although it continued to exist in practice. Preparations were in progress in Liechtenstein for introducing into the Constitution a provision guaranteeing equality of rights of men and women; all public-service posts had to be explicitly advertised for men and women, and the entire body of family law was being revised in the light of the principles of equality between the sexes.

36. Women's rights were human rights. Her delegation therefore considered it very important that the World Conference on Human Rights should address that issue. It was also necessary for the World Conference on Women in 1995 to give a decisive boost to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

37. Mrs. EJIRI (Japan) reiterated her delegation's hope that as many countries as possible would ratify or accede to the Convention. It was encouraging that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination against Women had been able to consider all the reports of States Parties, for that task was growing more difficult as the number of States Parties increased. The Committee therefore deserved commendation for its work, and the problems indicated in its report, such as lack of resources, duplication of work and a need for technical assistance, should be resolved through the concerted efforts of the international community. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made by treaty bodies to coordinate their work.

38. In the last two decades some progress had been made in the effort to advance the status of women, although equality had yet to be achieved. It was thus very important for the Commission to consider at its thirty-sixth session the elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination. Her delegation also hoped that the Commission would study ways of promoting the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

39. Early in 1991 the Government of Japan had completed the first review of its New Plan of Action Toward the Year 2000, which placed greater emphasis on equal participation by women in every aspect of the life of society and on the further promotion of international cooperation, taking into account the importance of incorporating women in the development process. The Government had also established a committee to study ways of reinforcing the national machinery for implementing the Nairobi Strategies. The New Plan incorporated the policy of assisting developing countries to establish their own national machineries, and in September 1991 a seminar on that issue had been held in Tokyo for the countries of the region.

40. Her Government noted that the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) helped to facilitate the economic and social participation of women by providing them with technical and financial support at the

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(Mrs. Ejiri, Japan)

grass-roots level. Japan intended to continue its contributions to UNIFEM and to the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) so that they could continue their valuable work. Many women's groups in Japan were taking an interest in and supporting the work of UNIFEM.

41. There was growing awareness that, in order to build better and more dynamic societies, it was essential to use the full potential of women in all areas. The World Conference on Women in 1995 would be an opportune moment to revitalize the efforts for the advancement of women. Her delegation believed that a unanimous decision was needed both on the venue and on the preparatory work, and it hoped that a consensus would be reached on those matters at the Commission's next meeting.

42. Ms. VEKREBAUEROVA (Czechoslovakia) said that her delegation had taken part as an observer in the Commission's thirty-fifth session, which had searched for new ways to improve the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies.

43. The first detailed analysis of the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies had revealed economic, political, cultural and psychological obstacles to progress in that field. The *de facto* and *de jure* inequality between men and women was incompatible with the spirit of the times. The involvement of women in political decision-making at all levels would speed up economic and social development and promote democracy.

44. Czechoslovakia was convinced of the importance of the protection of women's rights, especially their right to physical integrity, and it had welcomed both resolution 1988/27 of the Economic and Social Council on domestic violence and the Canadian proposal for the adoption of an international legal instrument for the protection of women against violence.

45. The World Conference on Women in 1995 would provide an opportunity to determine the procedure for the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. A successful Conference would require the participation of representatives of all trends in non-governmental organizations and a democratic exchange of opinions and experience, as well as wide publicity for the event.

46. Her delegation had referred earlier to the possibility of organizing a preparatory meeting for the conference in Prague in 1994. Once the venue of the conference and its orientation had been decided, it would be possible to determine the function of the regional conferences, including the European one. In order to contribute to the development of international cooperation in that area, Czechoslovakia was hosting the United Nations seminar on the role of ageing women in development in Bratislava in October 1991.

47. Czechoslovakia attached great importance to the interregional consultation on women in public life, to be held in Vienna at the end of 1991. It would be useful, despite the postponement, for the meeting to submit its conclusions as soon as possible.

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(Ms. Vekrbauerova, Czechoslovakia)

48. The United Nations should devote attention to the status of women in Central and Eastern Europe, where the reform process held both opportunities and perils for women. In that respect, the United Nations regional seminar on the impact of economic and political reform on the status of women in Eastern Europe and the USSR had been a stimulus. Its recommendations were of great importance to her country.

49. Czechoslovakia, which supported the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, was preparing its third periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was ready to discuss its second report at the Committee's January 1992 meeting. As that report had been submitted before the important political and economic changes that had taken place in her country, it would be enlarged and updated.

50. Ms. VAN HOUWELINGEN (Netherlands) said that her country had recently ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women in the Netherlands were concerned by the fact that, despite the adoption of General Assembly resolution 45/129 urging speedier implementation of the Nairobi Strategies and despite the drive with which the Commission on the Status of Women and other agencies and organizations interested in the implementation of the Strategies had started the decade, cut-backs in expenditure and postponements were lessening the possibilities of progress in that field.

51. As the advancement of women would not be considered a United Nations priority for the next biennium, it would be up to the Member States to decide how much money would be available for the cause of women. Unfortunately, many countries were reducing their budget allocations for women. For example, in the Netherlands, those allocations would be cut by almost 20 per cent. It would thus be necessary to strive for a change of policy in order to attain the goal set in Nairobi.

52. The Economic and Social Council had approved four additional preparatory meetings for the 1995 World Conference on Women. It should also formulate clear, specific guidelines for the activities to be undertaken by the year 2000 and for the implementation of the Strategies.

53. Austria and China had offered to host the World Conference, together with a forum for non-governmental organizations. It was important for the Commission on the Status of Women to receive full guarantees from the host country that any non-governmental organizations wishing to participate in the forum would have free access. It was also important for the Conference and the forum to be in some way linked in time and space. Lastly, satellite transmission facilities would have to be available, since they would make it possible to carry out the world-wide educational campaign to increase awareness of the obstacles encountered in achieving de facto equality for women.

(Ms. Van Houwelingen, Netherlands)

54. It was clear that women did not participate fully in public life and that there could be no true advancement of women if they did not participate in decision-making on an equal footing with men. The interregional consultation on women in public life, which had been scheduled to take place in Vienna in September 1991, had been postponed for lack of financial resources. The Government of the Netherlands, which had always supported debate on the participation of women in politics and which had given a grant to the Division for the Advancement of Women for the preparation of the report on that question, regretted that the consultation had not taken place. Since it would have contributed greatly to the discussion on women and politics scheduled under the theme of peace for the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, its conclusions should be included in the preparatory documentation for the World Conference. Doing so could help the Commission to focus on how to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level (Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, annex, recommendation XX).

55. The Nairobi Strategies identified 14 different groups of women as vulnerable. That grouping made it possible to avoid a static focus and to perceive the dynamism of each specific situation. The discussion of five of those groups in the Commission on the Status of Women had afforded new insight into the situation. However, nine groups remained to be studied. Furthermore, lesbians, women suffering from AIDS, abused women and women subjected to involuntary prostitution were not included in the Strategies.

56. The Netherlands considered physical and sexual violence against women a serious offence. In response to that problem, assistance was being given to the victims, information was being disseminated on the problem and training in self-defence was being given. In addition, four departments had started an anti-violence information campaign for men and boys, and the Emancipation Council had been asked for an opinion on methods of combating sexual harassment at work. In November, under the presidency of the Netherlands, the European Community would hold a seminar on that question.

57. Trafficking in women should be considered a violation of basic human rights and a crime involving deception, coercion and violence. That would make it impossible to invert the facts and blame the victims instead of the traffickers. In 1991, during the first European Conference against Trafficking in Women, organized in the Netherlands by the Foundation against Trafficking in Women and in the European Parliament by the Green Party, a European network had been established to develop joint strategies against trafficking in women.

58. Refugee women and children were another vulnerable group that deserved special attention: of the 16 million refugees world-wide, 80 per cent were women and children. The Netherlands looked forward to the guidelines on the protection of that group to be released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

(Ms. Van Houwelingen, Netherlands)

59. More information on women's economic activities was needed in order to measure the impact of economic policies on women and to assess women's contribution to economic development. Her country was therefore gratified at the new United Nations publication, "The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics". From the data therein, it could be seen that women still lagged in terms of power, wealth and opportunity.

60. In the statistical field, INSTRAW had also made important contributions. A recent evaluation showed that the Institute should concentrate more on cooperation with national and local institutes and should have more highly qualified staff. On the basis of that evaluation, the Netherlands was considering making a multi-year commitment to the Institute.

61. The Netherlands supported a multidimensional, pluriform definition of the concept of the family and hoped that the activities planned for the International Year of the Family would emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the individual family members and the equality of the sexes. The Year might include activities to promote the equality and independence of girls in all sectors. In the Netherlands, action had already been taken to put an end to measures that discriminated against elderly women with respect to pensions, income, housing and education and to public, health and social services. It was expected that, in principle, women reaching the age of 18 after 1990 would be capable of achieving economic independence.

62. Lastly, it was important to improve women's access to the communications media, since those media allowed victims of discrimination to make themselves heard and made it possible to disseminate information on the effects of discrimination on the lives of women. The Commission should decide on that issue as soon as possible.

63. Dame Silvia CARTWRIGHT (New Zealand) said that enormous progress had been made since New Zealand women had won the right to vote nearly 100 years earlier. There were now virtually no legal barriers to equality of men and women in New Zealand. In practice, however, that objective had not yet been reached. Women must remain especially alert so as not to lose ground at a time when New Zealand, like many other countries, was struggling with economic recession.

64. The first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, done in 1990, had indicated that New Zealand's experience followed the international pattern. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its monitoring committee were powerful mechanisms for helping Governments to convert de jure equality to de facto equality. In his report on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439), the Secretary-General had also emphasized the need to shift the focus from the prohibition of discrimination to the implementation of measures to correct any de facto inequalities.

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(Dame Silvia Cartwright, New Zealand)

65. That objective was a priority in New Zealand, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, an autonomous department, was responsible for contributing to its achievement. The Ministry advised the Government on all issues affecting women, particularly such issues as unpaid work in the private household, child care, violence, pornography, and the status of Maori women. It also analysed the impact of major policy initiatives on women.

66. One of the major problems that remained to be solved was that women's work in the home, in the community, on farms and in small family businesses was not taken into account when economic management decisions were taken. In statistical terms such work did not exist. Fortunately, women no longer worked only in those areas. In New Zealand, women worked in all spheres of activity and made up half of university enrolments. Some New Zealand women had even been members of United Nations peace-keeping forces in Namibia and the Persian Gulf.

67. Despite those advances, the assumption that women would be the predominant suppliers of unpaid domestic services continued to underpin the structure of New Zealand's society and economy. Perhaps the most revolutionary of the projects for advancing the status of women was the recognition of the value of such unpaid work.

68. One aspect of the problem, to which the Government of New Zealand was paying close attention, was the use of time, which gave an idea of the relationship between paid and unpaid work. The Department of Statistics was evaluating methods of valuing unpaid work, and it was hoped that, in line with United Nations recommendations, the contribution that the voluntary and household sector made to the economy would eventually be recorded in supplements to the national accounts.

69. The full integration of women in development was an important feature of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and one of the priority themes for the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

70. With respect to opportunities for women to influence environmental matters, New Zealand had joined the group of delegations sponsoring a resolution on the contribution of women to sustainable development, which had recently been adopted at a meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

71. With reference to the Nairobi Strategies, which stressed the need for women to prepare from an early age to face the psychological, social and economic consequences of a longer life expectancy, she described the situation of elderly women and indigenous Maori women in New Zealand.

72. Statistics revealed a worrying picture of the status of indigenous women in New Zealand. Maori women had the highest mortality from lung cancer

(Dame Silvia Cartwright, New Zealand)

amongst women in the world. In addition, the economic recession had seriously affected that group: the percentage of Maori women unemployed was three times higher than that of non-Maori.

73. The New Zealand Government's goal was to achieve equality of men and women in the workplace. Even though New Zealand had been the first country to give women the right to vote, only 14 per cent of the Members of Parliament were women. The Government did not believe that regulation would create equality, and was of the view that employment equity legislation would have to be replaced with a Trust to promote equal employment opportunities.

74. A forum such as the Third Committee made it possible to analyse those problems from an international perspective. Lastly, her delegation looked forward to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995. The experiences of the women of New Zealand might be well worth analysing when the challenges that women in all parts of the world faced today were considered at the Conference.

75. Ms. FENG Cui (China) said that her delegation was pleased to note that all aspects of the progress achieved through the Nairobi Strategies and the barriers encountered in the implementation of the Strategies had remained under discussion. The proposals advanced by many countries demonstrated the growing importance which the international community attached to issues relating to women and its recognition that the emancipation of women and equality of men and women were a measure of societal progress.

76. The Strategies, which were the programme of action for all countries, should achieve their objectives by the year 2000. However, current realities indicated that many political, economic, cultural and social barriers would have to be overcome. That task would require concerted efforts at the international, regional and national levels for the adoption of practical measures, as well as intensified work to achieve the objectives contained in the Strategies. The Chinese Government appreciated the efforts which had been made for the implementation of the Strategies.

77. Referring to the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she said that China had been one of the first States parties to the Convention and that it had recently submitted its second report to the Secretary-General. Her delegation was pleased that 109 countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention, and hoped that those which had not yet done so would become parties to it as soon as possible.

78. Her Government actively supported the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in which its experts had participated since 1982. With respect to the Committee's report, her delegation appreciated the enormous work done in accordance with the mandate

(Ms. Feng Cui, China)

set out in the Convention. The Chinese Government had always supported the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Her Government wished to express its gratitude to UNIFEM for carrying out projects in China, which intended to continue to develop its cooperative relations with UNIFEM.

79. The Chinese Government always attached importance to the role of women in the political life and economic construction of the State, as well as in the safeguarding of world peace. By way of illustration, she described the progress made and reforms introduced in the economy and other sectors through the active participation of Chinese women, who constituted half the population. Their participation made it possible to create suitable conditions for the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. An important role had been played by the All China Women's Federation since its establishment in 1949.

80. China had always cooperated with the relevant United Nations bodies and agencies in organizing seminars on issues related to women. Her Government had informed the Secretary-General of its intention to host the 1995 World Conference on Women as well as the forum for non-governmental organisations; it was ready to provide the sites and facilities needed for that purpose. Her delegation thanked the Group of 77 and all members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for their support and expressed the hope that its offer would be accepted.

81. Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (Bahamas) said that the fundamental principle underlying United Nations efforts to eliminate discrimination against women was that their political, economic and social status should be equal to that of men; that was the essential goal of the three international women's conferences and of the United Nations Decade for Women. Among the efforts made to sensitize Governments and the international community to the urgency of eliminating discrimination against women, the Nairobi Conference, at which the Forward-looking Strategies had been adopted was of special significance.

82. The elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination against women was the crux of the issue. Although substantive progress had been made in according women equality before the law, the international community had not been able to achieve that result in all States. It was also necessary to determine what effect the law was having on women's actual status.

83. A cursory examination of The World's Women: 1970-1990 demonstrated that the existence of legal equality had not had a significant impact on the problems of discrimination against women. Her delegation noted that women continued to play dual roles as wife and mother and worker, to receive less pay, to be less educated, to have limited prospects for advancement and to have only a marginal role in public and political decision-making. Legal equality could be meaningful only if administrative measures were put in place to implement constitutional and legislative provisions. Moreover, firm action

(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, Bahamas)

was required to counteract traditional values and attitudes that had kept women in their unequal status.

84. The task of the Commission on the Status of Women would be to identify those courses of action taken by Member States that had led to greater equality of the sexes, to study the possibilities of affirmative action and to redefine the social roles of men and women so as to arrive at conclusions and make recommendations.

85. The second priority theme, development, permitted a close scrutiny of the contribution that women could make now that Governments were beginning to accept the integration of women as a key element in their formal development policies. Her delegation considered it efficacious that the issue of elderly women in development was included among topics for consideration. Current policies on social security tended to exacerbate female poverty or create serious pressure on older women to seek employment. Her delegation noted the active involvement of UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was crucial to moulding international responses in that area.

86. Since women and children were the principal victims of war, civil strife and natural disasters, her delegation felt that it was only logical that women should have an active voice in deciding the policy choices for promoting international cooperation, peace and disarmament.

87. She commended the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in respect of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Her delegation, as a member of the Commission, would cooperate fully in ensuring that all outstanding decisions, including the decision on the venue of the Conference, were taken as a matter of priority. It was concerned that the resources required in order to ensure the success of the Conference were not forthcoming. The Interregional Consultation on Women in Public Life had been postponed for lack of extrabudgetary resources but, since it had not been cancelled, it was to be hoped that the 1995 Conference would still benefit from the input of that important meeting, since its conclusions and recommendations would be essential to drawing the distinction between political equality as a constitutional right and the de facto situation whereby women were absent from high-level positions.

88. It was a paradox that the United Nations, which was at the forefront of action for the advancement of women, was more a reflection of the existing situation than an ideal for which States should strive. To date, quantitative and not qualitative results had been achieved in the Secretariat, where both would have been desirable.

89. Her delegation was confident that it would be possible to solve that problem collectively and achieve targets of 35 per cent of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995 and 25 per cent of women in posts

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(Mrs. Sherman-Peter, Bahamas)

at the D-1 level and above by the same date. The Secretary-General had approved the recommendations of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women concerning the promotion, assignment and recruitment of women.

90. If future strategies for the advancement of women were to be cogent, a thorough understanding of recent trends was essential. UNIFEM, INSTRAW, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must cooperate actively. INSTRAW's work was important, and the Bahamas had recently notified INSTRAW of its intention to establish a focal point so as to maintain fruitful contacts with it. It was noteworthy that an increasing number of countries were establishing national committees for UNIFEM.

91. A major achievement of the first half of the Decade had been the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Bahamas was considering the Convention for ratification. As the monitoring body for the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had carried out valuable work. In respect of violence against women, in 1991 the Bahamas had adopted a Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, which was fully in concert with that Committee's work.

92. Her delegation associated itself with the sentiments expressed regarding the inclusion of women's concerns in major international forums. The achievement of equality of men and women would depend on the capacity and willingness of Governments to eliminate discrimination against women. At the same time, women themselves must work diligently for radical change to bring about equality, development and peace.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-SIXTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Friday, 18 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)
later: Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. IV, sect. D), 38, 77, 325, 344, 377, 439, 462, 491, 501)

1. Mr. KHOSHROO (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in accordance with the Islamic belief in the equality of men and women, Iranian women participated in a wide range of political, social, cultural and economic activities.

2. The Iranian Government's measures to eliminate discrimination against women in education had resulted in an increase in literacy among women from 29 per cent to 52 per cent between 1979 and 1989. Furthermore, female secondary-school graduates had slightly outnumbered male secondary-school graduates in 1988. The percentage of women at various levels of higher education ranged from 30 to 38 per cent.

3. In recent years there had been an outstanding improvement in the employment and professional advancement of Iranian women, as their representation had increased by 45 per cent in scientific and technical jobs and by 12 per cent in managerial and top-echelon administrative jobs. The number of women employed in the industrial sector had declined, owing to the wartime decrease in industrial activities, but over 35 per cent of public sector employees were women.

4. The Iranian Parliament had sought to create an even more supportive environment for female employees by enacting laws allowing women to work part time, prohibiting them from performing difficult and dangerous jobs and giving pregnant employees the right to perform light-duty jobs with no decrease in salary or benefits, as well as maternity leave of at least 104 days.

5. Special Bureaux of Women had been established in the Office of the President, the Judiciary and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote the integration of women into economic, social and political affairs, to protect their legal rights and to intensify their participation in international forums. In addition, a special deputy for women's sports activities had been appointed, and a charter had been elaborated for the Social and Cultural Council for Iranian Women.

6. He hoped that the Committee, in working to enhance the status of women all over the world, would help Palestinian women in the occupied territories and women oppressed by apartheid to secure full enjoyment of their rights.

7. Ms. ANSELM (Italy) said that current events in Eastern Europe would probably necessitate eventual modifications to the European Economic Community's Third Plan of Action for Women, to which the Italian Government had pledged its support. The forthcoming establishment of a single European market and the restructuring of the production sector in Eastern European countries threatened to cause higher unemployment among women, and had already

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(Ms. Anselmi, Italy)

resulted in a large number of migrant women, exposed to many forms of oppression and violence.

8. Women who exercised their right to equal participation in political life were faced with the paradox that, whereas women had their own characteristic approaches to working for the common good, they often adopted the values currently dominating the political world when they gained a measure of political power. The capacity of women to contribute towards strengthening the links between social justice and political necessity was thereby diminished. That problem should be addressed at the 1995 world conference on women.

9. In June 1990, Italy had enacted a law which provided a legislative basis for the existing National Commission for the Achievement of Equal Opportunity between Men and Women by determining its composition and purposes and giving it financial autonomy. The Commission, which represented many women's movements and associations, sought to eliminate all discrimination against women. It supported government policy on the subject and acted as a liaison between Italian society and institutions and between the regional and provincial commissions for equality.

10. In April 1991, Italy had enacted a law providing for equal opportunity in employment and career advancement, inter alia, by assigning to alleged perpetrators of discrimination the burden of proving their innocence. Moreover, a legislative basis had been provided for the existing Committee for Equality in Employment. In addition, laws had been drafted on measures to encourage women to assume economic responsibility in the areas of agriculture, trade, crafts and small and medium-sized enterprises.

11. The need for grass-roots participation made it essential that women should share common political values and objectives. Accordingly, the National Commission had sought to educate women on de facto discrimination through two initiatives: the publication and distribution of a guidebook on women's rights, which would form the basis for meetings and discussion groups, and the conduct of a survey on the public's reaction to images of women in the media and in advertising, which would help women to determine ways of changing discriminatory attitudes rooted in Italian culture.

12. Ms. DOHNAL (Austria) said that the United Nations should accelerate its efforts to improve the status of women by applying the principle of temporary positive discrimination system wide, particularly at decision-making levels. Her delegation was pleased with the current working method of the Commission on the Status of Women, under which three priority themes were discussed in depth at each session.

13. The elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination against women involved both the setting of legal standards prohibiting discrimination and the implementation of those standards. She regretted that almost one third of

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(Ms. Dohnal, Austria)

the Members of the United Nations were not yet parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and hoped that more States would ratify and implement that instrument. She also hoped that States which had subscribed to the Convention with reservations would adopt national policies allowing them to withdraw their reservations.

14. She endorsed the temporary implementation of quotas for affirmative action to narrow the gap between de jure and de facto equality. In Austria, initiatives had been taken to enable women to receive equal pay for work of equal value, to combine parental responsibilities with professional careers and to enjoy an equitable level of retirement income. It was essential for Governments to recognize that women's concerns were an indispensable component of all social, economic and political issues and activities.

15. Since women's rights were a human rights issue, her delegation recommended that the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should participate in future preparatory meetings for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, as well as in the Conference itself.

16. The highest priority should be given to the dissemination of information on women's rights, particularly in developing countries. Women had an important role to play in shaping development policies and should therefore be fully aware of their rights and of ways of translating them into action.

17. Given the importance of the work of CEDAW, she regretted that a lack of financial and personnel resources had hampered its operation. Austria was ready to help facilitate the sharing of ideas on implementing the Convention and on drafting periodic reports of States parties by sponsoring, together with the Division for the Advancement of Women, the participation of representatives of least developed countries in training courses on the Convention. The long-term objective would be to establish a training centre on the Convention within the Division. In addition, she looked forward to the Secretary-General's submission of proposals to provide the Secretariat with additional resources for preparations for the 1995 world conference on women. Austria was honoured to have offered to be the host country for the conference and to participate in the Commission on the Status of Women, to which it hoped to be re-elected in 1992.

18. Mr. VILLAGRAN DE LEON (Guatemala), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, said that the occasion represented the first time that the five countries had made a joint statement on the item "Advancement of women" in the General Assembly.

19. The status of women, particularly in developing countries, continued to be a matter of international concern. Women's creative potential and productive capacity were not being fully utilized; moreover, they had not received enough recognition for their already enormous contribution to

(Mr. Villagran de Leon, Guatemala)

development. It was essential for the international community to implement fully the international instruments adopted since 1975 concerning the status of women, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been ratified by the Central American States. Also essential was a comprehensive evaluation of progress in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and of the urgent situation of women living in rural and marginal areas and in conflict zones, or involved in mass migrations.

20. The integration of women in development would not come about merely by making women's issues a separate aspect of development planning and programmes or by adopting measures to compensate for the limitations of economic policies. Countries needed to recognize the crucial role played by women in development and the impact of that role on the economy. Such recognition would facilitate the advancement of women, including greater access to education and training and to concessional credit.

21. The Central American countries had made some progress in the advancement of women. Nicaragua had elected a female president in 1990; an increasing number of women held high-level government positions; national offices for women's issues had been established; efforts were being made to eliminate discriminatory legislation; references to traditional or subordinate roles for women were being removed from textbooks; and with the assistance of various United Nations agencies, workshops and seminars had been held to evaluate the situation of rural and urban women and women in special categories.

22. It was women who had suffered most as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s, which had forced Governments to cut social expenditure drastically. In Central America, additional factors made the status of women a matter of even greater concern. The countries faced overwhelming economic difficulties. A large percentage of the population lived below the extreme poverty level. Dramatic differences between social classes were exacerbated by high unemployment. The Central American Governments needed to adopt measures to create employment, including those which would enable women to launch small and medium-sized business ventures.

23. Three countries in Central America had witnessed armed conflicts during the 1980s and a resultant polarization of their societies; that had adversely affected women, particularly in rural areas. The other countries of the region had had to face the social and economic consequences of an increased number of displaced and refugee women. Clearly, any steps towards a peaceful settlement of the conflicts would free women to participate more fully in development; the international community must therefore continue to support efforts to promote peace and social justice in the region.

24. Of particular concern was the situation of the indigenous populations of Central America, which lived primarily in rural areas and had traditionally suffered from discrimination and marginalization. Many women died because of

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(Mr. Villagran de Leon, Guatemala)

lack of medical care, leaving homeless children who often turned to delinquency and drug abuse. The lot of the indigenous populations had to be improved gradually through far-reaching multisectoral and sectoral programmes, supported by political will.

25. Other pressing problems included high infant-mortality rates, malnutrition, extreme poverty, and absence of basic health services. There was a need for educational programmes which, while taking cultural differences into account, would provide women in the most vulnerable sectors with advice on such matters as family planning, child care and diet and would help raise awareness about the rational use of natural resources.

26. The countries of Central America recognized that the United Nations had played a fundamental role in drawing attention to the issue of women and development. Technical cooperation should be increased and measures adopted which would allow women to participate in all phases of technical-cooperation programming. The full range of women's contribution to development should be acknowledged, thus allowing women to participate equally in development activities, which should be carried out with due consideration for the particularities of the country involved. The United Nations should include more women's issues in its operational activities for development, in an integrated and multidisciplinary framework.

27. With the world moving towards a new era of friendly relations, development was more crucial than ever, as was the participation of women in that process. Peace and development were linked inseparably. It was therefore a matter of urgency to attain the objectives set forth in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries.

28. He hoped that the 1995 world conference on women would be a powerful force in improving the condition of women and incorporating them fully in development.

29. Ms. McLENNAN (United States of America) said it was becoming increasingly clear that, of all systems of government, democracy offered the best chance for men and women to develop their potential. The relationship between democracy, individual growth and economic development underscored the importance of respect for the human rights of men and women alike. In her statement to the Third Committee, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women had noted that democracy did not lead to the advancement of women but rather that without the advancement of women, there would be no democracy.

30. Elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination against women would certainly contribute to the integration of women in development. The gap

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(Ms. McLennan, United States)

between de jure and de facto status of women was well documented. Even more alarming was the extensive legal limitations on women's rights in some countries, often in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, even where women were protected by law, there was widespread disregard for their civil and political rights. Enforcement of the law required continuous cooperation between Governments, organizations and individuals and constant monitoring by national and international bodies.

31. Through its Department of State, her country collected information on human rights conditions world wide, published as country reports, which were available to the international community. Her country thereby helped to promote respect for the integrity and dignity of the individual and to encourage international condemnation of human rights violations.

32. The most pervasive form of abuse was domestic violence against women. In countries without legal prohibitions against abuse, the problem frequently went unreported. In countries with such prohibitions, enforcement was often lax.

33. Abuse against women was often grounded in cultural patterns and compounded by poverty. Tradition, however, did not condone the abridgement of rights and freedoms universally recognized as sacrosanct.

34. Her Government was particularly concerned about physical abuse such as dowry deaths, genital mutilation, spouse abuse and forced sterilization, and about the denial of equal protection under the law, abridgement of property rights and involuntary servitude. A key element of her Government's foreign policy was to pursue bilateral and multilateral efforts to eliminate human rights violations and to promote reform of the institutions responsible for such abuses. Her Government was also endeavouring to foster democracies and impartial judiciaries as a means of safeguarding individual liberties.

35. Her country had worked very hard over the years to eliminate discrimination against women and had made progress in many areas, including voting rights, education and access to basic services. Women's health issues were receiving more attention, and the National Institutes of Health had established in 1990 the Office of Research on Women's Health. Since the early 1970s there had been growing public awareness of and sensitivity to rape victims. There had also been some progress in training law-enforcement and health-care professionals to assist those victims in a more sensitive manner. Her Government had enacted legislation to ensure the timely payment of child support to divorced women with children. However, enforcement of those laws remained inadequate. Research from the 1970s and the early 1980s had indicated that even with alimony and child-support payments, women could expect a 25 to 30 per cent drop in their standard of living after divorce, while their former spouses experienced no such decline.

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(Ms. McLennan, United States)

36. Under United States law, employers were prohibited from discrimination on the basis of gender and from paying women less than men for equal work. Women in her country had begun to enter fields that had once been considered the province of men. Nevertheless, a great number of women continued to be occupationally segregated and jobs held by women generally paid considerably less than those held by men.

37. Women continued to be underrepresented in middle- and upper-level management in both the private and public sectors; that had given rise to the notion of an invisible "glass ceiling" which prevented women from being promoted to high levels. Federal anti-discrimination enforcement efforts had in the past focused primarily on discrimination related to hiring and firing. Recently, however, the Government had begun to pay particular attention to understanding and eliminating the "glass ceiling". To that end, it had carried out a series of pilot studies to identify employment practices that limited the promotion of women and minorities. Several bills had been introduced in 1991 in the United States Congress with a view to setting up a government commission to investigate issues and make recommendations.

38. Her country would continue its efforts to eradicate both de jure and de facto discrimination against women. It had co-sponsored a draft resolution at the thirty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women aimed at improving the procedure for considering communications concerning the status of women, most of which concerned allegations of human rights violations against women. Since the current procedure was inefficient, the Commission and the Economic and Social Council were being deprived of an invaluable source of information about the effects of discrimination on women's lives. The Commission had decided to postpone a decision on revising the communications procedure until its 1992 session and, in the interim, her delegation would encourage all interested parties to discuss how the procedure could be strengthened.

39. In its 1991 Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had demonstrated a strong link between human development and human freedom. It had also made explicit the connections between human development and economic progress. The report had expanded the scope of development to include human freedoms, human rights and non-coercive, informed choice in all areas of development and had defined the basic objective of development as enlarging the range of human choices. Her Government applauded the work done by UNDP and endorsed the new, broader definition of development. It hoped that the issues of human rights and equality between men and women would be integrated into the work of an increasing number of bodies in the United Nations system.

40. Her Government also supported the conclusions of the World Development Report to the effect that progress in economic development coincided with investment in people, improvement of the climate for enterprise, and the opening up of economies to international trade and investment. She also noted

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(Ms. McLennan, United States)

the wide range of activities being carried out by the United Nations system for the integration of women into development, an outstanding example of which was the publication The World's Women: Trends and Statistics. It was widely recognized that the involvement of women of all ages in the development process was a critical factor in achieving broad-based sustainable economic growth. For its part, her country would continue to ensure that women participated in economic development by giving them the tools, skills and resources to combat poverty. In addition, it believed that elderly and ageing women could play an important role in social change and should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of development.

41. Her Government was committed to improving the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions and urged Member States to support United Nations efforts to increase the percentage of women in professional positions by nominating more women candidates, encouraging women to apply for vacant posts and creating national rosters of women candidates.

42. Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey), referring to the report of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/46/325), welcomed the broadening of INSTRAW's field of action and the strengthening of its catalyst role, and commended the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on the progress of its activities and the reformulation of its terms of reference and objectives. His delegation appreciated the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women and hoped that its resources would be increased. Turkey had taken an active part in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women for the past three years. It would participate as an observer when its membership expired at the end of 1991. Turkey was a party to the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and was pleased to note that ratifications now numbered 109. His country would be taking an active part in preparations for the 1995 world conference on women and was already planning a number of national study and evaluation meetings and two international conferences, on evaluation of the status of women in economic and social development and on women and the environment.

43. Turkey had set up a department on the status and problems of women, under a ministry headed by a woman, which was responsible for drawing up national policy and mobilizing resources for integrating women in development, improving their level of education, participation in agriculture and industry, legal protection and health and social care.

44. At the second session of the Economic and Social Council in 1991, Turkey had introduced resolution 1991/64, on behalf of the sponsors, welcoming the initiative taken by a group of First Ladies to convene a Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women in Brussels in February 1992, and appealing for continued support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development in cooperation with other United Nations organizations.

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(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

45. Drawing attention to the general elections to be held in Turkey on 20 October, he said there were many more women candidates than in past elections. A woman had just been appointed as spokesman of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Government spokesman was also a woman.

46. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (A/46/439), he noted that discrimination against women still existed in every country, whatever its level of development, and that the slow progress in implementing the Strategies was largely due to economic, political and other priorities. Turkey had just launched a campaign to overcome obstacles in education, employment and health. Current projects, some of them drawn up in cooperation with international institutions, were aimed essentially at women in the less developed areas of the country.

47. In Turkey, women's access to all levels of education and training and their participation in development were established principles. A special department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security dealt exclusively with women's employment, and a quota was reserved for handicapped women in all sectors. A service for elderly women was responsible for increasing the number of retirement homes and clinics. A research and education centre for women had just been established in Istanbul University. A library of women's works with an information centre had also been opened. His delegation welcomed the publication of The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics and commended the organizations and services which had produced it.

48. Mr. Slaby (Czechoslovakia) took the Chair.

49. Mrs. BIRAUD (France) said that there was still a long way to go before the objectives of the Nairobi Strategies were achieved. Discrimination was still firmly entrenched. Her delegation therefore welcomed the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Two of the main objectives of the involvement of women in development were to reduce poverty and to generate income. France was increasing its contribution to UNIFEM, and as a result of its Director's recent visit to France, her Government was cooperating in training women to set up enterprises and in promoting action on domestic violence.

50. The fallacy that raising the level of general development would bring about advancement of women had been exposed. Indeed, without the advancement of women there could be no development; real equality for women was the consequence of their success, not the prerequisite. Hence the importance of training in all fields and at all levels for women of all ages and at all levels of society.

51. The contribution of elderly women would be studied by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1992. The fact that older women were among the poorest was largely due to their limited resources, the inequality between the sexes

(Mrs. Biraud, France)

in professional life and the heavy burden of unpaid work in the home. The increasing number of old people, most of them women in developing countries, affected employment, the family, health, ways of life, society as a whole and all generations. People referred to "an ageing population", its "low productivity" and its "lack of imagination". In fact, however, old people could be very active. Women could look after themselves far longer than men could and were thus less of a burden on society. They could also look after other members of the family. Indeed, that period of their life meant increased, rather than freedom from, family responsibilities.

52. Peace was a priority theme for women, nationally, internationally and in day-to-day life. Women - particularly single women, refugees and handicapped women - had long been the victims of violence. Her delegation was keenly interested in the work of experts on that subject and France was working on action to help victims, which was aimed at violent men as well as women victims. The aggression which often begot violence could be channelled into beneficial directions; it was a matter of concern to all, not only the victims, since it could compromise progress in democracy and civilization.

53. Referring to the 1995 world conference on women, she noted that costs would be kept to the minimum - an all too familiar situation for women - but hoped that the restrictions would not be too stringent. As to the situation of women in the Secretariat, strong political will was called for, and if measures were not taken soon, both on the recruitment of women, especially at high level, and on the promotion of existing women staff, the United Nations would be deemed guilty of discrimination.

54. Mrs. LISSIDINI (Uruguay) noted that, even after 10 years, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was still not universally in force. Cultural patterns persisted which ignored or minimized women's contribution to development and perpetuated their stereotyped role. The goals of the Nairobi Strategies were far from being achieved. Discrimination against women was particularly serious in the light of women's multiple role in educating, training and caring for human resources. Undervaluing women's work, both financially and socially, was bad for productivity and economic growth. The advancement of women should be viewed as essential to the achievement of equality between all human beings and an investment in economic, social, cultural and moral progress.

55. Her delegation supported the efforts of UNIFEM to achieve full integration of women in development, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, where poverty had sharply increased in the past decade as a result of the economic crisis. According to figures produced by regional organizations, there would be 53 million women on the Latin American and Caribbean labour market by the year 2000, and it was vital that that should be accompanied by equality of earnings and a fairer sharing of home chores. To that end, INSTRAW's work was important in helping to make women's work more visible and hence its effect on development more fairly assessed. Her

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(Mrs. Lissidini, Uruguay)

delegation supported the recommendations of CEDAW at its tenth session (A/46/38, para. 1) concerning the quantification of unpaid work by women in family enterprises and in the home.

56. Discrimination fed on ignorance and lack of information, and education was therefore vital for both men and women. In that connection, she stressed the importance of the work of the United Nations Department of Public Information. Consideration should be given to increasing broadcasts on matters concerning women. She noted that there were more programmes in English than in Spanish, French and Arabic, despite the world's large Spanish-speaking community, mostly women, who could usefully be given information on United Nations activities for the promotion of women. Publications were important in identifying obstacles to women's advancement and ways of overcoming them, and public information campaigns, international seminars and meetings could help women advance towards decision-making levels.

57. Her delegation was concerned that the recent unprecedented political changes and the great advances in science, technology and culture had not benefited women, who now suffered double discrimination: as women, and as disabled, young, old, migrants or refugees. Her delegation therefore fully supported the holding of a world conference on women in 1995.

58. Uruguay had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had adopted a number of national measures to implement it, including a law prohibiting all forms of discrimination in the field of work, the appointment of a committee of women to deal with ill-treatment and violence, and a national network for advice and guidance on the promotion of women in the economic, social, political and cultural fields. Those measures, along with the activities of the Women's Institute, which promoted the adoption of legislation and other measures, and the Women's Forum, in which a number of non-governmental organizations participated, were part of the national effort to implement the Nairobi Strategies.

59. With regard to women's participation in the United Nations Secretariat, she regretted that the target of 30 per cent for 1990 had not been achieved and urged that efforts should be redoubled to achieve the objective of 35 per cent by 1995, including 25 per cent at the D-1 level and above.

60. Mr. KOTEY (Ghana) said that despite the slow progress in implementing the Nairobi Strategies, it was encouraging that, since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the international community had set in motion a chain of activities aimed at eliminating traditional forms of discrimination and stereotypes. His delegation commended the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus in future on selected themes, examining problems and issues and recommending remedies to Governments and to the international community. His delegation hoped that the Commission would endeavour not to give a blanket interpretation to those themes, ignoring the fact that women lived under different conditions in different parts of the world.

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(Mr. Kotey, Ghana)

61. A recurrent theme was the need for education and training for women, particularly in the rural communities of the developing countries. His delegation shared the view that national and international programmes would be useless if women, the beneficiaries, lacked the training and skills to appreciate or implement them. Formal and informal education would help people to realize their full potential and a well-designed educational programme for rural women would provide the training that would ensure them regular and adequate incomes, thus helping to break down the poverty barrier and establish a climate of equal treatment for women and men.

62. On the question of women and the environment, to be discussed by the Commission on the Status of Women and the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in June 1992, his delegation shared the view that women, as teachers of children and providers of basic needs in the family, particularly in developing countries where environmental degradation was most apparent, had a central role to play in environmental issues. The international community must therefore try to make full use of women's knowledge and experience in land utilization, water management, sanitation and food. At the same time, since environmental degradation, particularly in the rural areas of the developing countries, derived from poverty, developing countries must be helped to undertake programmes designed to meet the basic needs of poor rural dwellers, particularly women, and to protect the environment.

63. Ghana welcomed the decision to hold the world conference on women in 1995 and agreed on the need for regional meetings prior to and in preparation for the conference with the participation of public and private sectors, including non-governmental organizations and, of course, women.

64. In Ghana the agricultural sector still provided employment for the majority of people, and government programmes over the past decade had been directed towards rural development and improvement of productive capacity. Women had been encouraged to undertake income-generating projects, such as the production of food crops and the building of storage silos. Ghana welcomed the support given to those projects by the United Nations and other bodies, in particular UNIFEM and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

65. The National Council on Women and Development had been greatly helped by local non-governmental organizations, in particular the 31 December Women's Movement. In December 1991, Ghana's First Lady, who was President of the Movement, would be hosting an international forum on health sponsored by the World Health Organization.

66. Mrs. KALEMA (Uganda) said that the world conference on women in 1995 would provide a good opportunity to review and appraise progress made in implementing the Nairobi Strategies and to focus on increasing women's participation in development. However, a large percentage of women in the

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(Mrs. Kalema, Uganda)

world remained underprivileged and subject to discrimination, especially in developing countries, where they were doubly disadvantaged because of their gender and the poverty and indebtedness of their countries. During the restructuring of the United Nations, attention must remain focused on social issues relating to women in order to achieve the desired goals.

67. Uganda called on all countries that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to ensure its universality and effective implementation. She highly commended CEDAW and the Commission on the Status of Women for the excellent work that they had carried out. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies (A/46/439) gave due attention to the role of women who had to overcome multiple obstacles to attain equal status. The efforts made by UNHCR, UNIFEM, ILO and WFP were commendable and Governments should be mindful of their obligations in that regard. Her delegation reaffirmed its support for the activities of the specialized agencies in helping developing countries in that field and the enormous work undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

68. Uganda noted with satisfaction the work carried out by INSTRAW and expressed appreciation to the donor countries, particularly the Nordic countries, for their support for the Institute. The underrepresentation of women in the Secretariat, particularly in senior-level and decision-making posts, gave rise to serious concern. It was hoped that during the process of correcting that imbalance, the representation of women from developing countries would be seriously taken into account.

69. Preservation of the environment was essential for sustainable development. In developing countries, environmental degradation resulted from poverty and underdevelopment and affected women the most. By assisting developing countries in halting environmental degradation, the international community would also be helping women by raising the living standards in those countries. Environmental protection must be based on development, which could be achieved only through assistance based on the transfer of resources and technology.

70. In implementing the Strategies, Uganda had made remarkable progress in improving the status of women, ensuring equality between men and women and promoting women's participation in national development. The Ministry of Women, Youth and Culture had been strengthened and was carrying out seminars and training programmes for women leaders on gender-related issues and provided advice on projects to promote the economic integration of rural women. It was her Government's practice to appoint women to high-level decision-making posts. In an effort to redress the disproportionately low enrolment of female students in institutions of higher learning, the Government had introduced the policy of preferential recruitment. Uganda had taken measures to increase women's access to credit and training in bank management. The participation of women from all sectors of society in

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drafting the Constitution of Uganda was perhaps the most significant development.

71. Mrs. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia) said that her delegation was deeply concerned that CEDAW continued to experience difficulties in the timely consideration of the reports of States parties. The strengthening of substantive and technical support for CEDAW, as recommended by Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/25, was consistent with the high priority that should be accorded to that Committee. Her delegation noted with satisfaction the efforts by CEDAW to rationalize its procedures and take into account the States parties' diverse cultural background and social and economic systems. Efforts to promote legal literacy on the part of women were an important component of promoting de facto equality. Indonesia was conducting a campaign to provide women with information on their legal rights and on labour and marriage legislation.

72. In implementing the Nairobi Strategies, although progress had been made in eliminating de jure discrimination against women, de facto discrimination still existed in all countries. That situation must be addressed and efforts to eradicate gender-based discrimination should be increased. The priority themes to be considered at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women were particularly relevant. Her country looked forward to the convening of the world conference on women in 1995, which would speed the implementation of the Strategies.

73. National mechanisms, which were essential in implementing the Strategies and the Convention, must be strengthened, and the technical assistance to countries wishing to establish or enhance such mechanisms was important for success. Indonesia had enhanced its national machinery over the past year. Provincial governments were committed to providing increased resources for the advancement of women and were studying the situation of women at the provincial level. Trained staff and access to modern communication equipment were equally important for strengthening national machinery. Accordingly, steps were being taken to institutionalize gender-analysis training in the Department of the Interior.

74. With regard to the status of women in the Secretariat, her delegation was disappointed with their representation at senior levels. Indonesia appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to remedy that imbalance and hoped that progress could be made. She commended the work of INSTRAW in improving statistics, indicators and data on women, particularly elderly women. Its new programme on women, environment and sustainable development was of growing importance. Indonesia appreciated the important activities being carried out by UNIFEM, particularly programmes that had a positive impact at the grass-roots level. UNIFEM was an effective instrument of advocacy and a source of catalytic action in behalf of women in developing countries. Indonesia, in its efforts to promote full equality for women, had benefited from that organization's programmes.

75. Mr. KONIG (Commission of the European Communities) said that the Commission was considering legislation on the protection of pregnant women at work, women who had recently given birth and women who were breast-feeding. That proposal laid down measures relating to leave, employment rights and healthy working conditions. The Commission had also drawn up legislation and a code of conduct for protecting the dignity of women and men at work. Its aim was to provide guidance on taking measures to promote awareness of the problem of sexual harassment and recommend steps to prevent it.

76. The Commission had put forward a proposal to undertake measures in four essential areas relating to child care: the provision of services for children of working parents, education and training, leave arrangements for employed parents, and arrangements to make the workplace more supportive of the needs of parents.

77. The Community was carrying out the NOW Initiative, which related to vocational training and employment for women in order to improve their integration into the labour market, in particular in the less developed areas of the Community. In order to ensure the success of the projects undertaken, the Commission had financed a specific network of national coordinators responsible for project follow-up, organized information seminars with the participation of women's organizations and published relevant brochures and leaflets.

78. The Community had continued to develop a Europe-wide women's studies programme, which had been fully institutionalized in a number of universities and research centres so that the situation of women could be considered from a global and multi-disciplinary perspective. The existing data bank on women-related studies would be distributed to national centres.

79. Under its new guidelines for financial and technical cooperation with developing countries in Latin America and Asia, the Commission sought to ensure that the changes brought about by projects were not detrimental to the situation of women and that specific measures were adopted to involve women on an equal footing in decision-making, production and social activities. The Community provided ongoing assistance to ensure that a gender analysis was included in all phases of development projects so that women's needs were taken into account.

80. The Community sought to encourage women to play a more active role in aid operations, thereby increasing their technical, economic and management capacity and strengthening their social role. Its strategy was twofold: to increase women's productivity and earnings by giving them greater access to extension services, loans, technology and natural resources, and to develop human resources through long-term investment to promote literacy, education, health care and family planning.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.